



A comparative study of 'happiness index' in medical and paramedical students

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Abstract

Introduction: Happiness is a very subjective feeling and may mean absence of sorrow to indefinite pleasure; to different persons!

Material and methods: We derived happiness index of teenagers by asking them 20 questions having score of 1 – 5. We measured happiness amongst teenagers studying 1 year M.B.B.S., 1 year B.Sc. nursing and 1 year physiotherapy. Comparison of happiness levels, was done between these groups.

Results: Many of the physiotherapy students were happy with their present. Nursing students were the least happy with present day turmoil. Medical students had reasonably good count on many criteria. However they were involved in lowest social activity.

Conclusion: 32 – 40 percent individuals in our study had happiness index less than 73. They were given tips for happiness enrichment.

Key words

Happiness, Happiness index, Stress.

Introduction

In a class of 150 students, learned faculty asks "How many of you want to be happy?" Almost every one raises the hand. And now arises the pertinent question, "What is happiness?" Hardly

2 % of M.B.B.S. students raise their hands to define happiness. And here are the answers!!

"Happiness is a state of mind". "It is when you are satisfied and contented"! "It is a subjective feeling of wellbeing and is shown by positive



emotions". Happiness in internet lingo is, UG, WUW and UDnG, WUWnTG; i.e. "You get, what you wish (to get) and you do not get, what you wish (not to get), e.g. You want money, you get it; you do not wish to get disease and you do not get diseased."

Jain mahasatiji Tejaswini bai says, happiness is UL, WEUG, i.e. "You like, what ever you get." In other words, you work hard, put in maximum efforts to get the best; but accept and relish, whatever result finally comes in. Shrimad Bhagwad Gita says "*Karmaneye vadhikareste, ma faleshu kadachan*"; you have all the rights to do hard work, but do not expect the best results: Both the themes suggest to accepting the role of destiny and being happy.

Economists have considered financial stability as a measure of happiness. Higher the gross domestic product more is the happiness [1]! Sociologist think that more civilized the society, more disciplined the people: happier they are [2]. Green brigade persons say more the conservation of the environment and natural resources, happier are the people [3]. Eastern culture believes in hedonism and says that every thing in this universe is meant for human pleasure, i.e. eat, drink and be merry. Hindu philosophy says more you are spiritual and contented; happier you are [4]!

According to U-M political scientist Ronald Inglehart, the most effective means to get happiness seems to change with rising levels of economic development and financial independence. In subsistence-level societies, happiness is closely linked with in-group solidarity, religiosity and national pride. At higher levels of developments, free choice in how to live one's life, has the largest impact on happiness [5].

During past 26 years, the World Values Surveys have asked more than 350,000 people how happy they are, using the same two questions. "Taking all things together, would you say you are very happy, rather happy, not very happy or not at all happy?" "All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?" [6]

Comparing World Values Survey data from 1981 to 2007 with earlier data from 1946 from the World Database of Happiness; Inglehart and colleagues found that 19 of 24 countries show rising happiness. Amongst these India, Ireland, Mexico, Puerto Rico and South Korea; showed steeply rising trends. Austria, Belgium, the United Kingdom and West Germany, showed downward trends [7].

Happiness is defined as state of being pleased, whereas joy is considered a great pleasure or great happiness [8]. Happiness also denotes feeling nice, enjoying the moment, being fortunate or having a good luck [9]. Happiness per se finds very little reference in medical books. However pleasure, positive emotions and mood changes are often referred to. Peptide neurotransmitters like enkephalins, endorphins and dynorphins are considered major groups of opioid peptides to cause mood changes [10].

Happiness is such a subject that economists, psychologists, politicians and national policy makers have taken keen interest in its study. Personal quest for happiness and national interest to achieve general happiness have lead to various philosophies of happiness. For the first time in 1972, Bhutan's King introduced the philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH) and its four development pillars at an international conference. The pillars of national happiness were sustainable development, preservation and promotion of cultural values,

conservation of the natural environment, and establishment of good governance.

Youth is the future of a country. In present study we measured happiness index of students of Medicine, Physiotherapy and Nursing. Study in these medical subjects is considered highly demanding and asks for hard work, strict discipline and consistent performance. Are the teenagers happy in these tight schedules? Do they enjoy the golden days of their lives?

Materials and methods

The study was carried out at B. J. Medical College, Ahmedabad and affiliated institutes of Nursing and Physiotherapy. We devised a questionnaire to cover various aspects of life, which reflect ones' acceptance of the society, his adjustment with the life and overall pleasures; summing up to a defined level of happiness. We derived 20 questions, each bearing three replies and being scored 1, 3 or 5. There were 60, 60 and 150 participants from I year B Sc Nursing, I year Physiotherapy and I year MBBS class. The participants were asked to reply to these questions, during study of physiology of pleasure hormones. The data received were statistically analyzed.

The possible minimum and maximum score were 20 and 100 respectively. Family affairs, leisure time activities, perception about self, smelling positive vibes in the native, acknowledging vices present in the society and relations with neighbors; were the six major pillars of happiness index we studied. These heads mainly contributed / reflected to one's happiness index. These major groups respectively had minimum / maximum scores of 04– 20, 03– 15, 04–20, 03– 15, 04–20 and 02–10. The scores of more than 90 and less than 60 were considered extremes on higher and lower sides of the score. A very few persons had score outside the range of 60–90. Participants were

divided into having scores of 0 – 60 (sad), 61 – 73 (less happy → happy), 74 – 87 (happy → very happy) and 88 – 100 (extremely happy).

Results

In nursing and physiotherapy, girls formed the bulk of study. In medical, the boys were more in number. Compared with male, in all instances, females had higher happiness index (**Table - 1**).

We looked at stream of study and highest/lowest happiness index and the percentage of participants having the same. In the study, Medical students had lowest and highest happiness index of 46 and 96 respectively. However these extreme scores were seen in 1 participant each. (0.7% of sub group) Extreme of scores reflect personal upbringing, out look to the life, and presence/ absence of spirituality and contentment (**Table - 2**).

Out of 20 criteria considered, family affairs, leisure activities, perception about self, smelling positive vibes in the native, acknowledging + accepting vices present in the society and relations with neighbors; were the major pillars to form happiness score. These six groups, respectively had contributed to happiness index: minimum /maximum scores of 04–20, 03–15, 04–20, 03–15, 04–20 and 02 –10.

We arrived at average score out of five under each pillar of happiness index and found out score out of 30 for these six pillars. We multiplied this score, to get score out of 100, giving equal weight age to each group. This compared well with score actually achieved in the questionnaire, with unequal weight age to different headings (**Table - 3**).

Highest sub group score about self perception, was seen in physiotherapy students (4.62 out of 5). Self perception consisted of ones' past, present, future and respect in the society.

Leisure activities included daily pleasantries, outing and social service. Lowest sub group score with leisure activities, was seen in physiotherapy students (2.8 out of 5).

Average score of all the three groups was very similar. 32–40 percent individuals with happiness index less than 73 were seen as less happy persons. They needed introduction to tools of happiness enrichment including yoga training (**Table - 4**).

A score less than 3 on a given criteria, suggested pathetic condition on a given criterion, accepted by more than 50% respondents. Corruption in the society, Poverty levels and Apathy to social service; were the major culprits. Physiotherapy and nursing students had very low score regards picnic and outing. This may be reflecting burden of study and financial jugglery. Score more than 4.5 suggested that 75% of respondents were very happy on the said count. Optimism about their future and good family relations, were the prime contributors to higher happiness index in all groups.

Most of the nursing and physiotherapy students had regular family dinner together. Nursing students enjoyed good relations with the neighbours. Physiotherapy students had very satisfactory scores on count of family prayers and satisfaction with health care status in native.

Many of the physiotherapy students were happy with their present. Nursing students were the least happy with present day turmoil.

Medical students had reasonably good count on many criteria. However they were involved in lowest social activity. (**Table - 5.1, Table - 5.2**)

Discussion

Girls had, in general, higher happiness index. This reflects flexibility and joyous nature of girls. However the percentage difference between girls of different streams of study was not sizable.

Medical students were happier with their family finances, had more daily pleasure activities and had more outings. However they had lesser prayers together, were low in social services and had not good neighborly relations. They were least satisfied with cleanliness, traffic arrangements and health care facilities in the native. They did not relish their past.

Average happiness score of all the three groups was very similar. 32 – 40 percent individuals with happiness index less than 73 were seen as less happy persons. They needed specific aids to achieve joys in the life.

Since we had teenagers in our study and our perspective was a little different from other studies about happiness; our criteria for happiness index differs. We like to continue the study further.

Conclusion

32 – 40 percent individuals in our study had happiness index less than 73. They were given tips for happiness enrichment.

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Gender	I year B.Sc. Nursing		I year B. Physiotherapy		I year M.B.B.S.	
	%	average happiness index	%	average happiness index	%	average happiness index
Male	10	74.67	22	73.39	55	74.70
Female	90	76.41	78	76.94	45	76.58
Total	100	76.23	100	76.17	100	75.54

Table - 2: Stream of study and extremes of happiness score (% of participants).

Happiness index	I year B.Sc. Nursing	I year B. Physiotherapy	I year M.B.B.S.
Group Average	76.23	76.17	75.54
Highest Score	92 : 1.6% participants	92 : 1.6% participants	96 : 0.7% participants
Lowest Score	64 : 3.3% participants	60 : 5.0% participants	46 : 0.7% participants

Table - 3: Major happiness criteria, average happiness score in each super heading and happiness index, in different groups.

Happiness Criteria	I year B.Sc. Nursing	I year B. Physiotherapy	I year M.B.B.S.
Family affairs	4.37	4.42	4.21
Leisure activities	2.87	2.8	2.87
Self perception	4.28	4.62	4.47
Positive vibes native	4.17	4.2	3.72
Accept society vices	3.1	2.79	3.2
Relations with neighbours	4.0	4.24	4.13
Score out of 30	22.79	23.07	22.6
Hypothetic h index out of 100	75.97	76.9	75.33
Group average happiness index	76.23	76.17	75.54

Table - 4: Happiness index levels in different streams of study.

Happiness index	I year B.Sc. Nursing	I year B. Physiotherapy	I year M.B.B.S.
	%	%	%
60 or less	00%	05%	04%
61 – 73	32%	35%	32%
74 – 87	63%	50%	57%
88 or more	05%	10%	07%
Average score	76.23	76.17	75.54

Table - 5.1: Happiness criteria and happiness index, in different groups.

Happiness index criterion	I year B.Sc. Nursing	I year B. Physiotherapy	I year M.B.B.S.
Family finances	3.50	3.3	4.23
Family relations	4.97	4.83	4.88
Fly dine together	4.97	4.97	4.49
Fly pray together	4.03	4.54	3.24
Neighbour relations	4.6	4.4	4.21
Befriend unknown	3.4	4.07	4.04
Pleasure activity	3.77	3.5	3.9
Social service	2.03	2	1.59
Picnic	2.8	2.8	3.11
Your past	4	4.43	4.37

Table - 5.2: Happiness criteria and happiness index, in different groups.

Happiness index criterion	I year B.Sc. Nursing	I year B. Physiotherapy	I year M.B.B.S.
Your present	3.73	4.6	4.25
Your future	5	4.93	4.83
Native health care	4.27	4.63	4.11
Native cleanliness	4.4	4.37	3.77
Native traffic	4	3.6	3.29
Society corruption	2	2.4	2.71
Society alcoholism	3.8	3	3.79
Society crime rate	3.57	3	3.41
Society poverty	3.03	2.77	2.89
Your respect in soc	4.37	4.5	4.43
Group Average	76.23	76.17	75.54